

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
INFORMATION REPORT

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2. The commanding officer of the 13th Penal Battalion was Maj Ivanov; he and his staff were regular army officers for whom the 13th Penal Battalion was a regular assignment. All other personnel of the battalion were former officers, ranging in rank from junior lieutenant through captain, who had been found guilty of some offense and had been reduced to privates.
3. The battalion consisted of four companies; each company contained four platoons of three squads each. A squad contained 9-10 men, a platoon about 30 men, and a company about 120 men. Altogether the battalion contained 450-500 men. Squad, platoon, and company leaders were former officers who wore the rank of, and received the pay of privates; even though some of these men were unit commanders, their pay was the same as that of the men in the ranks.

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4. The penal battalion drew all the tough assignments, such as spearheading attacks, destroying enemy tanks, fighting behind the enemy lines, destroying bridges and supply depots to the rear of the enemy lines and capturing enemy prisoners for intelligence purposes. In one engagement in February 1944, we attacked and destroyed 17 enemy tanks. On another occasion the unit blew up a bridge to the rear of the enemy lines. In March 1944, in a battle near Zhitomir, the battalion distinguished itself in combat, and suffered 40% casualties. After each of these three instances, 30-50 ex-officers were relieved from duty with the penal battalion; some were reinstated in their former ranks, and others were sent to officer training schools. All ex-officers who were wounded in combat were reinstated in their former ranks, and were assigned to other units. The achievement most certain to gain the release of an ex-officer from the penal battalion was to capture enemy officers alive for interrogation. I was transferred to an officers' school in Irkutsk in March 1944 for heroism under enemy fire.

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